



BEGINNINGS

Getting Your Dog And Cat
Started On A Raw Food Diet

by Melinda Miller

Bravo Raw Diet
www.bravorawdiet.com

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Why Feed Raw Food Diets?

More and more professionals in the world of dogs and cats (breeders, veterinarians, breed ring handlers, sports competitors) are advocating a second look at what we feed our animals. Why? Because there is a growing belief that dogs and cats need a raw, natural diet in order to be healthy and that commercial pet foods cannot supply the nutrients necessary for good health and long lives.

What Should Carnivores Eat?

Proper nutrition is vital to good health. In nature, it is live foods that truly nourish both people and animals. If your animals are to thrive, they need the live enzymes, phytochemicals, antioxidants, and unadulterated amino acids, vitamins, and minerals that only raw food can provide. While commercial pet foods are convenient, most contain sub-standard or condemned meats. And because they are also highly processed, at extreme temperatures, they are devoid of many of the building blocks of good health and often full of questionable preservatives. So, commercial pet foods may sustain life, but unlike raw diets, they do not contain the life-enhancing nutrition that promotes health.

Cats and dogs are carnivores, or meat-eaters. Yet most dry commercial pet foods are at least 45% (or more) grain because the carbohydrates are needed to hold the food together. But as *The Merck Veterinary Manual* tells us, dogs and cats have “no dietary requirement for carbohydrate”. Does it make sense to feed our carnivores a diet that contains at least 45% of a substance they don’t even need? Additionally, carbohydrates are metabolized by the body to glucose (sugar) which is known to feed cancers, diabetes, and other disorders that now plague our companion animals. If grains and vegetables were primary nutrient sources, you’d see cats and dogs stalking ears of corn and heads of wheat.

Raw diets simulate the menu that nature intended carnivores to eat. When a carnivore eats an herbivore such as a rabbit, the carnivore eats some meat, some bone, some organ meats (liver, heart, kidney, etc.), and some green vegetation contained in the herbivore’s digestive tract. That’s nature’s perfect meal - the meal raw diets replicate.



Are Raw Diets Safe?

Dogs and cats are NOT humans. They have a very different digestive tract and process. For example, we can eat all the onion we want without harm, but some dogs can get anemic from a single, small portion of onion. We can eat a pound of baker's chocolate and merely get fat or nauseous, while dogs can die from even a lesser amount. We can get very sick from raw meat, while our pets thrive on it as their natural diet. Again, they are NOT human. Dogs and cats have a much shorter digestive system than we do, which means that foods are processed quickly -- before harmful bacteria have a chance to multiply and cause problems. Also, carnivores have a very high level of acidity in their digestive systems. This high acidity, which allows them to process the nutrients in raw meats and bones, is also hostile to bacteria. We've all seen dogs eat true garbage (rotten foods, decaying squirrel carcasses, etc.) without any ill effects. Nature did not evolve carnivores to eat a diet that would kill them. And remember, we aren't suggesting you feed spoiled, contaminated foods. A raw food diet consists of good quality, USDA inspected and approved meats and bones – the ingredients used by **Bravo!**



Protecting the Health of Your Animals

A high-quality, raw food diet can provide the nutrients that will help ensure your animals lead long and healthy lives. Some animals with existing health problems, when switched to a raw food diet, may experience an improvement in their conditions. Healthy animals on a raw diet are likely to avoid some of the illnesses that are now becoming common in our companion animals. Lifetime picky eaters, when given the diet designed by nature, may suddenly turn into chow hounds. Raw diets for almost every animal significantly reduce, or even eliminate the need for veterinary dental work. While you are spared the cost of that dental work, your animal will not be subject to the risks of the associated anesthesia.

Let **Bravo!** provide you and your animals with the benefits of raw food diets in a convenient and affordable form.

A Bit About Bravo!

- Made with 100% USDA-inspected and approved ingredients
- Manufactured in a USDA-inspected facility
- Wide variety of proteins including: chicken, turkey, beef, lamb, pork, rabbit, duck, ostrich, venison, salmon, buffalo, quail, and elk
- Antibiotic-free poultry and grass-fed, hormone-free, imported red meats
- Whole bone products and ground meat/bone products to fit the feeding program you deem best for your animals
- Ground meat/bone products are available in 3 convenient sizes: 1 lb., 2 lb., 5 lb.



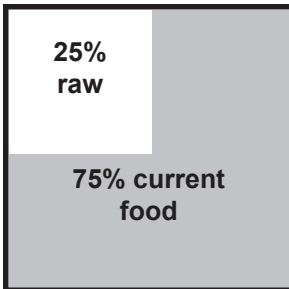
Making the Transition to a Raw Diet

Preparation for making the transition:

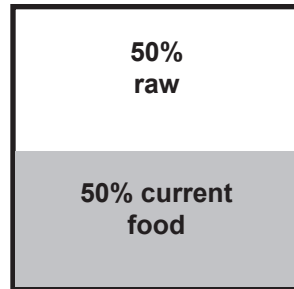
For dogs — The day before you begin feeding raw meats add some probiotics (acidophilus) and digestive enzymes to the dog's normal food.

The Transition:

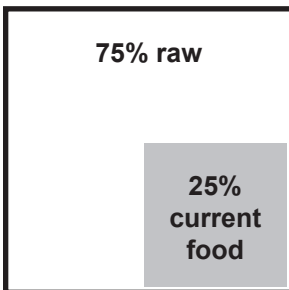
While **Bravo!** is an ideal feeding program, any sudden change in food can disrupt your pet's digestive system. A gradual change in foods over 10 days is best because it allows your animal's system time to adjust comfortably without upset. Follow the plan below and your pet should have an easy transition to **Bravo!** raw diet.



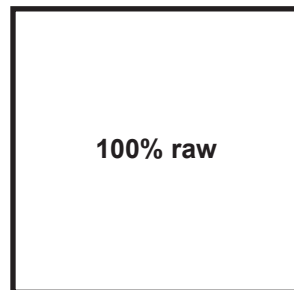
For days 1-3



For days 4-6



For days 7-9



Day 10 and after



Some Raw Diet Basics

While variety is the key to outstanding health when feeding a raw diet, during the first 10 days of transition, it is best to stick with just **one** type of meat/bone. Most dogs do well with either chicken or turkey. Lamb is naturally higher in fat than poultry, and may cause loose stools during the initial transition, so we recommend that you wait until after the transition period to introduce lamb into the diet.

After the transition is complete, gradually begin to introduce other meats, vegetables, and extras. Most dogs will do well with chicken and turkey as the foundation of the diet for 3 or 4 days a week. On the other days, feed some beef, lamb, and fish (canned mackerel, or fresh fish if your dogs like it). About once every 10 days, feed one meal of an “exotic” meat such as rabbit, ostrich, buffalo, or elk. Small amounts of cottage cheese and raw eggs can also be fed once or twice a week if your animals like them. Ultimately it is a wide variety of meats, bones, and vegetables that will provide your dog with robust health and youthful vitality.

If you want to feed your own vegetables, be sure they are **MUSHED** in a food processor or juicer. Dogs and cats do not produce the enzyme (cellulase) needed to digest the cell walls (cellulose) that make up fruits and vegetables. By “mushing” the vegetables, you are breaking down the cell walls so that your animals have access to the nutrients they contain.

If you are not feeding the **Bravo!** Blends (ground meat, ground bone, ground organ meats, ground vegetables), then be sure to feed small amounts of organ meats (heart, liver, kidney) two or three times a week.

From day 5 onward, every 3 to 5 days, provide your dog with a recreational bone such as a raw neck bone, knuckle bone, or a raw marrow bone (the long leg shank bone filled with pasty marrow). If feeding marrow bones, scoop the majority of the marrow out of the bone for the first few times. The marrow is rich and fatty and can cause stomach upset for some dogs. If your dog has a weight problem, continue to scoop the marrow out before giving him the bone.

These recreational bones provide physical and mental stimulation, and also provide significant dental benefits. Dogs with even severe tartar often have nearly white teeth after just a few weeks of bone-chewing. Dental cleanings (and the risks of the associated anesthesia) are often eliminated for bone-chewing dogs.



Caution: If your dog is an aggressive chewer, do not feed marrow bones. Because marrow bones do not “give”, it is possible for very aggressive chewers to fracture a tooth. These dogs will do better with knuckle or neck bones.

Your animal is an individual. Respect what his body tells you — just like us, there will be some foods that he loves, and some foods that will upset his system. Eliminate, especially in the beginning, any foods that seem to trouble him. They can be added back, experimentally, as his system regains overall health.

The transition plan we’ve outlined works well with most animals, but if your dog or cat seems upset by the change in diet, go a little slower. There is the rare animal that is unable to tolerate a transition diet that contains both kibble and raw foods. This may be due to a difference in digestive processes for carbohydrate-laden kibbles vs. quick-digesting meats. These animals may do better with a “cold turkey” switch, that is, a complete change from the existing diet to the raw diet.

Cats and Raw Diets:

It can be difficult to switch a cat’s diet. Unlike dogs, who are usually willing to investigate any potential food source, cats often imprint on the specific smell and taste of the food they are used to eating. So, while a few will immediately appreciate the raw food offered to them, most will look at you as if you are trying to poison them. But with a little patience on your part, your cat will make the transition.

The key to success with these finicky felines is to go very slowly. In some cases, you will mix only a finger-full (yes, a finger-full) of raw food into their current diet. Just enough to let them get used to the slight smell of the new food in their bowl. Very gradually increase the amount you mix in with their food. Over the course of a month, most will make a full transition, and no longer tolerate anything but raw food. One cat, who did require a 35-day transition, now swats the dogs in his household so he can steal raw food from their dishes.

Rabbit and venison tend to be very popular with cats, as are the poultry items. Organ meats (heart, liver and kidney) are very important to feed at least a few times a week. And while some cats love vegetables, they aren’t really necessary.



Advice on Supplements

Required Supplements:

1. **Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs)** - begin using after the diet transition is complete and continue using on a daily basis. Flaxseed Oil or Fish Body Oil (not cod liver oil) provide the necessary EFAs. Oils labeled “cold-pressed” are preferable if available. Flaxseed Oil and Fish Body Oil should be kept refrigerated at home.

Which to use: While either is fine, we recommend Fish Body Oil instead of Flaxseed Oil because there are some reports of dogs becoming “itchy” from flaxseed oil. This is most likely due to the fact that the body must convert the substances in flaxseed oil (a vegetable source) into a useable form, while fish oil (an animal source) is a primary form of the nutrients, so no conversion is necessary. Studies have shown that the conversion process does not always go smoothly. Regardless, either is fine to use. If you elect to use flaxseed oil, and your dog shows signs of itchiness when you add it to the diet, you can always switch to fish body oil. However, if your dog has severe skin conditions and allergies of any kind, fish body oil is the preferred source of EFAs, and may help alleviate some of the associated symptoms. NOTE: Cats MUST have fish oil.

If you use a capsule form of EFAs, any of the following are acceptable ways to administer them: some dogs will eat them if they are just mixed into the food; some dogs will eat them as a treat; or simply give them like a pill; or poke a hole in one end with a pin and squeeze the liquid onto food.

Dosage:

- Fish Body Oil (NOT cod liver oil) capsules — 500mg to 1000mg per 10 lbs. of pet; **OR**
- Liquid Salmon Oil — 1/2 teaspoon per 10 lbs of pet; **OR**
- Flaxseed Oil — 1 tablespoon per 25 lbs. of pet

2. **A high quality vitamin/mineral supplement** - Begin using after the first week of the transition and continue using on a daily basis. Be sure the product has trace minerals, not just vitamins. Use at 1.5 times the labeled dose.



Recommended Supplements:

1. Digestive enzymes — these are good to use daily for the first 4 to 6 weeks on a raw diet, but can be continued permanently if needed. Digestive enzymes aid in the digestion of foods and the subsequent nutrient absorption. These are important during the transition stage of the diet because the dog's system needs time to begin producing the enzymes required for digesting raw foods.

Some brands are made specifically for animals and these are best to use. However, any human mixture that contains at least amylase, protease, lipase, and cellulase is fine.

If using an animal-specific formula, feed according to the directions on the container. If using a human formula, use one capsule once a day. (Twist capsule open and pour/mix into food.)

2. Probiotics - to be used daily for at least 4 - 6 weeks, but are good to use on a permanent daily basis. Probiotics are essentially "good bacteria" that balance and neutralize "bad bacteria". By doing so, they promote effective digestion and a healthy digestive tract. Even in kibble-fed dogs, the regular use of probiotics can help reduce/eliminate coat and skin problems, gas and bloating, and bad breath.

There are several animal-specific probiotics, but you can also use human acidophilus *Plus* mixtures — any mix containing all or some of the following: L. Acidophilus, L. Bulgaricus, B. Bifidum, and B. Longum. The best brands are in the cooler section. Store in your refrigerator at home.

If using an animal-specific formula, feed according to the directions on the container. If using a human formula, use one capsule once a day. (Twist capsule open and pour/mix into food.)

3. Vitamin E (any mixed tocopherol blend) — 200 iu per 50 lbs. of dog. Begin using 2 weeks after the diet transition is complete and use on a permanent basis, 2 or 3 times a week. Vitamin E ensures that the Omega-3 EFAs are completely metabolized. Since we are supplementing with EFAs, we should also supplement with Vitamin E. Bravo Wild Salmon Oil is preserved with Vitamin E so you do not need to use additional Vitamin E.



Why Supplements are Necessary

Many people question the need for supplements since a natural, raw diet is supposed to be providing all the nutrients that are lost in the processing of commercial foods. While this is true, we also have to account for the following:

1. We are only able to approximate a wild diet, so supplements fill in the typical “gaps”.
2. Vegetables and grains today are often grown in soils that are largely depleted of nutrients. So the vegetables we feed, and the grains that are fed to the poultry, beef, and lamb we feed to our animals in the form of meat, are also lacking in these nutrients, because they cannot be absorbed from the soils. The vitamin/mineral supplements especially provide the trace minerals that would be transferred in food if the soils weren't depleted.
3. The flaxseed oil and/or fish oil are rich sources of Omega-3 essential fatty acids (EFAs). Wild carnivores obtain the Omega-3s in several ways. Omega-3s are concentrated in organs like the eyes and brain, parts of the animal that are not typically available for us to feed. Additionally, Omega-3s are found in natural grasses, so the meat of grass-fed animals, such as wild deer and other herbivores, are rich in Omega-3s. Carnivores feeding on those herbivores thus obtain the necessary Omega-3 fatty acids. But the meat animals we feed are almost exclusively raised on grains, which are high in Omega-6 fatty acids, and severely lacking in the Omega-3s. Fish body oil or flaxseed oil supplementation provides the Omega-3s needed for healthy skin, coats and proper brain and joint cellular function.
4. Vitamin E: Adequate levels of Vitamin E help ensure that the Omega-3s are completely metabolized.



Foods to Avoid

1. Onions — in some dogs and cats, even very small amounts of onion, in any form (cooked, raw or dehydrated) can cause a form of hemolytic anemia.
2. Chocolate — especially baker's chocolate. The theobromine in chocolate can be toxic to dogs.
3. Yeast — in any form. Many dogs do not tolerate yeast very well and it can lead to, or exacerbate, certain health problems.
4. White potatoes — feed sparingly. Never feed raw white potatoes with sprouts or green skins. If the potatoes are sprouted or have green skins, either pare them or cook them before using.
5. Grains — dogs and cats were not meant to be grain eaters. They are carnivores. Veterinary nutritionists agree that they do not have a need for carbohydrates. Unlike humans, carbohydrates are not a source of energy (except in excessive sprint activities like greyhound racing) . Dogs and cats derive their energy from fats and protein. In addition, grains break down into sugars in the body and sugars feed unhealthy conditions like cancer, obesity, diabetes, and some skin problems.
6. Dairy products — milk and its derivatives are not natural foods for adult animals. Most dogs (and many cats) do not digest them well. Plain yogurt and cottage cheese are exceptions to this. But if you are feeding yogurt for the natural probiotics, be aware that the amount of probiotics in yogurt is so small that huge portions of it must be consumed to gain probiotic benefit. It is more efficient to use a probiotic supplement.
7. Pacific Northwest Salmon/Trout: these carry a parasite that can be transmitted when the fish is fed raw, which causes severe illness. If you're not sure where it's from, don't buy it.
8. Vegetables like peas and carrots that are high in sugar should be used very sparingly. This is also true of all fruits which are also high in sugar.



Tips, Tricks & General Information

1. Water consumption on a raw diet normally decreases because of the high moisture content in the raw foods, so do not become alarmed if your dog begins drinking less.
2. One side effect of a raw diet will be quickly apparent -- a large reduction in stool as well as a significant reduction in stool odor. Stools from dogs on raw diets tend to be harder and smaller. The stools will often be light colored, even chalky white. This is normal and it is a result of increased calcium content and increased food digestibility -- the animal is actually utilizing most of what it eats. Some dogs will strain slightly at the hard stools. This is fine, even beneficial, as the hard stools tend to naturally express the dog's anal glands. (Stools from kibble fed dogs are smellier and larger because large amounts of the kibble contents cannot be utilized by the dog's system, so this undigested matter is expelled as rancid stool.)

Sometimes there will be a variation in the consistency of stools when feeding a raw diet. The stools may go from very hard to very soft, from day to day, or even in the course of one elimination. This is also normal. A raw diet contains a lot of variety. What goes in must come out, so it is natural to see this variety reflected in the stools. Different foods will produce different types of stool. (Kibble produces consistent stools because you are feeding one thing -- so you get out what you have put in. The uniform stools, the same size and consistency every day, are really as unnatural as the kibble itself.) Remember, with raw diets it is **VARIETY IN, VARIETY OUT.**

See your veterinarian if your dog has diarrhea, (remember a little bit of soft stool is NOT diarrhea) or if your dog has been trying constantly for hours to pass stool but can't.

3. Some dogs, when starting on a raw diet, will experience occasional vomiting of small pieces of bone. This is normal in the first few days, as their systems must learn to accommodate the digestion of bone.
4. Some dogs will also go through a period of "detoxification". The nutrients provided by the fresh foods allow the body to rebuild healthy systems. The stronger, healthier system begins ridding



itself of various toxins that have accumulated in the body. Signs of detoxification may include slightly loose, mucous-covered stools, slightly goopy eyes, draining ears, minor rashes or increased itchiness. Many dogs will not experience any of these signs, and those that do will normally complete “detox” within a week or two. Dogs that have been on steroids, antibiotics, or other long-term drugs, may experience prolonged detoxification periods. You should always consult with a veterinarian if you believe your dog is manifesting severe problems connected to the diet change.

5. If your dog is scheduled for surgery, eliminate the essential fatty acid supplements (flaxseed oil or fish body oil) at least 10 days before the surgery. The omega-3 EFAs in these oils reduce blood coagulation, and thus increase bleeding. As increased bleeding is not desired during surgery, it is best to cut out the EFAs during the pre-op and post-op periods.
6. About vegetables -- If your dog's stools appear to be extremely hard on a regular basis, try adding extra veggies as they will tend to loosen the stool. Each dog has a different tolerance for veggies. For each 50 lbs. of dog, try starting with 1/4 cup per serving and if the stools do not become loose, increase that amount to 1/2 cup. If the 1/2 cup causes loose stools, then reduce the amount.

If your dog needs to lose weight, and can tolerate extra veggies, significantly increase the amount of veggies while reducing the amount of meat in the diet. Your dog will feel full, but be eating fewer calories and will thus lose weight.

7. Keep some **canned pumpkin** (no syrup, no additives -- just plain canned pumpkin) on hand. If your dog gets loose stools or gets very hard stools, canned pumpkin will usually correct both of these problems, i.e. - it will firm up loose stools and/or it will soften very hard stools.
8. Do not get in the habit of feeding lots of raw meat without bone. Plain meat is very high in phosphorous. In order to keep their calcium/ phosphorous levels balanced, dogs and cats must have a source of calcium. It is the bone in the diet that provides the calcium. Bravo! prepared products have the bone conveniently ground in for you.



9. Raw diets can be adjusted to suit the dietary needs of dogs with medical conditions (liver, kidney, or heart disease, cancer, etc.) but you should seek the advice of qualified animal nutritionists and/or veterinarians before starting such dogs on a raw diet. Raw diets, properly adjusted to an animal's individual condition, have been known to provide significant improvements in the animal's health, but again, qualified counseling must be obtained before a raw diet is begun.

10. How long can you keep Bravo!® in the refrigerator?

The general rule of thumb is that the meat will stay fine for 2 to 3 days, and sometimes longer. If it smells bad to you, don't feed it.

Here are some tips for handling Bravo!:

- keep Bravo frozen until you are getting ready to feed it
- thaw the meat in the refrigerator
- if you need to thaw the meat quickly, thaw on the countertop, but refrigerate it while there are still ice crystals in the center of the meat.
- place your thawing meats in another plastic bag or container just to make sure the meat juices don't leak out.

11. Try to feed meals at room temperature. While the GI system can handle very cold and frozen foods, it is able to function more efficiently when the food is warmer.

12. Microwaving: While it is best to avoid microwaving, it is sometimes a necessity. When you do find it necessary, be sure to set the power level at 30% or less and microwave for periods of a minute or less, repeating until the meat is just thawed. It is important that you not let the meat temperature get too high so that the bone does not cook and harden.



How Much to Feed

It's important to realize that every animal has a unique metabolism. Housemates Dandy, a 3-year old Jack Russell Terrier, and Barney, a 4-year old Newfoundland, both eat the exact same amount of food everyday despite their huge size difference. It is also important to know that metabolism changes with age, size, frame type, state of health and activity level. With all that in mind, you will need to monitor your animal to find an ideal maintenance diet. But we have these basic guidelines to help you:

1. **THE BEST METHOD:** Begin feeding the same amount of food you are currently feeding. If you are feeding one cup of kibble per meal, feed one cup of raw diet per meal. In 7 to 10 days, do a “rib check” (see next page for details), and adjust the amount you're feeding up or down as indicated by your animal's condition. If your animal is overweight, or moving in that direction, feed LESS. If your animal is “ribby” or underweight, feed MORE. OR:
2. For a mature dog, feed approximately 2% of total body weight. For a 50 lb. dog, this means feeding 1 lb. of food per day. This amount can be fed in a single meal or divided into multiple meals.
3. OR: Begin feeding per the following chart:

	Weight	Amount to feed
Tiny	7 - 15 lbs	1/4 - 1/2 lb daily
Small	16 - 25 lbs	1/2 - 3/4 lb daily
Medium	26 - 50 lbs	3/4 - 1 lb daily
Large	51 - 75 lbs	1 - 1.5 lbs daily
Very large	75 - 100 lbs	1.75 - 2 lbs daily

Feed puppies 5% - 10% of their body weight daily. In general, feed young, small, active, underweight, and growing dogs more food; and feed older, sedentary, overweight, and larger dogs less food.

Tip: 1 cup of ground meat/bone is approximately 1/2 lb.



Weight Management

Obesity is the number one health problem among dogs and nearly 60% of adult dogs are overweight. As with people, obesity leads to a wide variety of health problems that can seriously affect the quality and length of your dog's life. As the physique of each dog is different, no one weight can be said to be proper for a specific breed or size of dog. To tell if your dog is at a proper weight, practice the following weight management tests on a biweekly basis. Make adjustments to his diet as needed.

• The rib check

A quick and easy way to tell if your dog is at the right weight

1. With your dog standing in a normal manner and you standing next to him:
 - Place your thumbs on the middle of your dog's backbone and let the fingers of each hand spread down and across his rib cage on both sides
 - If you can't feel the ribs easily (without pushing) your dog is probably overweight. If you can easily feel each rib with deep depressions between each rib, your dog is probably a bit thin. If you can easily feel just the outline of each rib, your dog is probably at just the right weight.

• The overhead check

1. Looking down at your dog from overhead, see if you can notice a waist behind the ribs.
2. Most dogs at a healthy weight should have an hourglass figure
3. If your dog doesn't have an hourglass figure, he is probably too heavy.

• The profile check

1. Examine your dog's profile from the side
2. Does he have a clearly defined underline (abdomen) slightly tucked up behind the rib cage?
3. If there is no tuck-up, your dog is probably overweight.

If your dog is overweight

1. Cut out all snacks from his daily diet
2. Cut each meal portion by 10% - 15%
3. If you are worried about your dog feeling hungry because of the reduced rations, increase the amount of vegetables he is getting. These add bulk without adding many calories.

For More Information

Below are resources for natural feeding and natural rearing.

Natural Nutrition for Dogs and Cats

Kymythy Schultze

K9Kitchen: Your Dog's Diet

Monica Segal

www.monicasegal.com

Switching To Raw

Susan K. Johnson

www.switchingtoraw.com

The BARF Diet

Give Your Dog A Bone / Grow Your Pups With Bones

Dr. Ian Billinghurst, B.V. Sc.

Raw Meaty Bones

Raw, Meaty Bones

Tom Lonsdale, DVM

www.rawmeatybones.com

The Complete Herbal Handbook for Dogs and Cats

Juliette de Bairacli Levy

Dr. Pitcairns Complete Guide To Natural Health For Dogs and Cats

Richard Pitcairn, DVM

The Nature of Animal Healing

Martin Goldstein, DVM

Homeopathic Care for Cats and Dogs

Don Hamilton, DVM

Unless otherwise indicated, these books are all available from **www.dogwise.com**
800 776 2665